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Re : Trip to the Ukraine of a group of " Ukrainian Catholic Youth" from Canada
in Aug 1969

Source: George HECASSOWARY /4

Date : 25 Nov 1969

In August of 1969 a group of approximately 25 undergraduate university students from Canada, members of "Ukrainian Catholic Youth", took a three-week tour of Ukraine. The group's travel arrangements were made through the Astra Travel Agency in Toronto (owned by Bohdan Voloshyn). They were accompanied by two priests dressed in lay clothing. The tour guide was Vasyl Balan.

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1. Lviv: Here the group attended ~~xx~~ service in St. George's Cathedral, where, together with all the people attending the church, they sang the service.

At the end of the service, the tour group sang the hymn "Bozhe Velykyy Yedyny" (Almighty, Only God) which has a verse asking God to give Ukraine freedom. The congregation was considerably shocked.

2. Kiev: Before going to Kaniv to visit the grave of Shevchenko, the group to leave bought a memorial wreath ~~xx~~ at the foot of Shevchenko's monument.

In Kaniv the two priests led a prayer, the wreath was deposited, and the group sang Shevchenko's "Testament".

3. Yalta: Here the group was taken on a tour of a winery. While there they sang various Ukrainian songs, ending with "Shche ne vmerla Ukraina" - the Ukrainian nationalist anthem. Everyone dispersed, ~~xx~~ leaving only one Georgian who pretended not to understand Ukrainian. At the end the leader of the group, Vasyl Balan thanked the Intourist guide and told him that the group would like to sing him a song of farewell. They sang a UPA song called "Ya sychodnya vid vas ~~xx~~ vid-yizdzhayu" (I Leave You Today). At this the Intourist guide grew very angry and shouted at them in English, "This is a direct provocation!" The group showed great surprise and explained that they always sing this song when leaving someplace.

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 SECRET

-2-

4. Kiev: Back in Kiev before leaving Ukraine, the group went to the theatre. The leader of the group was called into the Intourist office. When he came into the room and introduced himself, everyone present in the room quickly left. After sitting there alone for some time, he was called by a man into another room. Waiting for him there were six men and one woman - heads of Intourist offices from Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, the head of the Kiev KGB, and the head of the international section of Intourist for North America (the woman). The KGB official shouted at him for about 1½ hours, threatening to expell the whole group from Ukraine immediately. He showed Balan several cars waiting outside ready to take the whole group to the airport. At the end of the harangue, Balan told them that the group ~~were~~ had planned to come back next year, but under the circumstances neither they, nor any other groups from their organization would consider coming again. At this point an argument broke out between the KGB official and the Intourist people. In the end they allowed Balan to go and the group to stick to their schedule, pretending that they believed that the group had not known that they had engaged in provocative actions.

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